WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for processing a photographic image captured by an image capture system, comprising the steps of:

a) determining a maximum dark value for the image capture system representing the response of the system to no light exposure;

b) generating an image processing path for processing the image prior to display on an output device, the image processing path having one or more image dependent image transforms, that upon processing the maximum dark value produces a processed maximum dark value that meets a predetermined criteria for darkness such that the "smokey black" problem is minimized; and

c) applying the image processing path to the photographic image to produce a processed photographic image.

2. The method claimed in claim 1, wherein the photographic image is a photographic negative film image, the maximum dark value is Dmin, and the step of determining the maximum dark value of the image capture system comprises scanning an interframe gap between frames on the film.

3. The method claimed in claim 1, wherein the photographic image is a photographic negative film image, the maximum dark value is Dmin, and the step of determining the maximum dark value of the image capture system comprises using an identification code associated with the film that points to a Dmin value stored in a data base.

4. The method claimed in claim 1, wherein the step of generating an image processing path includes the steps of:

a) providing a plurality of different processing paths;

b) propagating the maximum dark value through the different processing paths, and

c) choosing the processing path that produces the most desirable processed maximum dark value.

5. The method claimed in claim 1, wherein the step of generating an image processing path includes the steps of:

a) providing a base image processing path;

b) propagating the maximum dark value through the base image processing path; and

c) modifying one or more image transforms the base image processing path based on the propagated maximum dark value to produce the generated image processing path.